

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Making It Work

Department of Education

A Student's Story

This Plan Works!

"Pick a college that best fits your needs. Sometimes this is not what you planned on." This is just part of the advice Lauren Brown offers for high school students as they plan for the future. Lauren, a freshman at Wayne State College, speaks from experience. Although Wayne State wasn't the college she originally planned to attend, she now says that, "This was the best decision. I really like Wayne." While life events changed her plans for college, she is very happy where she ended up.

Lauren found out the summer before her freshman year in high school that she has Juvenile Ankylosing Spondylitis (JAS), a condition that causes painful inflammation of the ligaments and tendons, as well as

inflammation of the inner eye. Lauren says, "I hurt every day, all day and there are days when all my joints hurt. I tire easily because of the pain." She also experiences acute eye redness, pain and sensitivity to sunlight.

Lauren missed many days of school at Norfolk Senior High, not so much from the pain but from the side effects of the various medications she takes and a weakened immune system. Despite the frequent absences, Lauren took college prep classes and participated in career exploration activities during high school. Arrangements were made through her IEP team to allow her to complete some of her classes at home, with the support of her mother and assistive technology.

Lauren also worked with Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Specialists Judy Wehrle and Lisa Mitchell during high school to help determine her plans for the future. Interest testing and work experience opportunities led Lauren to decide she would like to major in Secondary Special Education.

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Partners in Planning:

504 PLANS

Not every student with a disability qualifies for or requires special education services. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act offers another option for those students who, due to their disability, need accommodations in order to be successful in school.

What is Section 504?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based upon disability. This law contains provisions to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are met as adequately as the needs of those without disabilities are met.

Who is eligible?

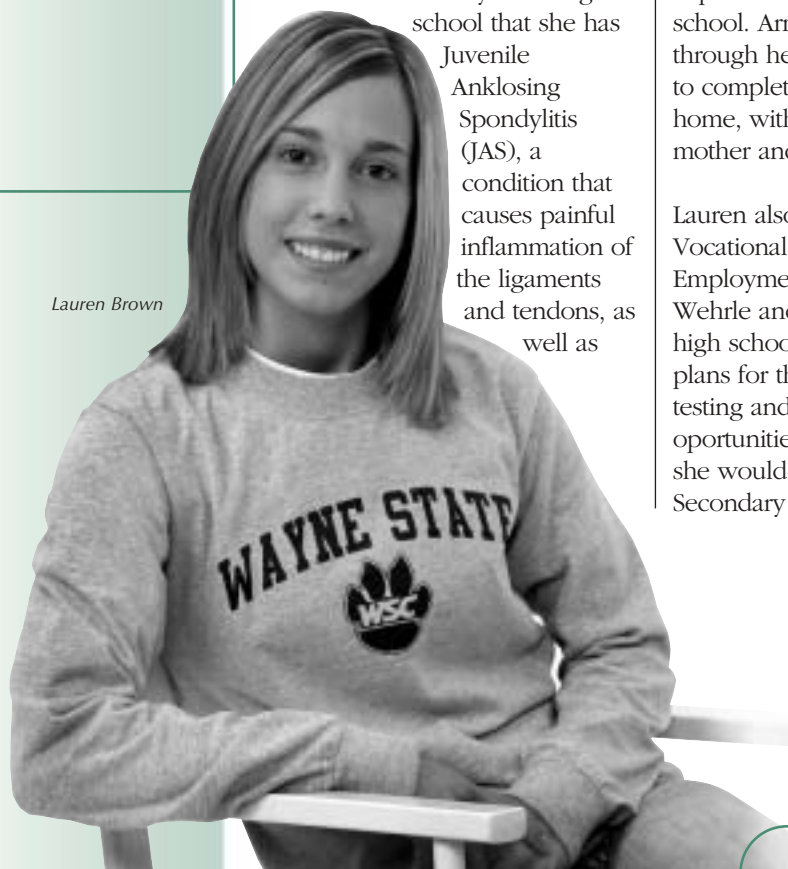
Section 504 applies to those students who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

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Lauren Brown



This Plan Works . . . continued

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As she began planning for college, Lauren found that her choices were

limited by certain factors. She wanted to attend the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, but the size of the campus is too physically challenging for her. Proximity to her family and doctors were other factors she needed to consider. While it took some

convincing from her parents, she decided to attend Wayne State College.



Once again, planning was key. Lauren's mother, Nancy Brown, stresses the importance of parents visiting colleges with their child and connecting with the campus Disability Services Program. Because services for students with disabilities are very different between high school and college, it is extremely important to make this connection.

Lauren and her family worked with this program to, among other things, arrange for a private dorm room. This accommodation was necessary due to her weakened immune system and her need for rest.

Another part of planning for college involved working with Jeff Krutz of the Assistive Technology Partnership to figure out the technology supports she would need. Jeff recommended a number of computer devices, including those that allow her to enter notes and write reports on her computer by voice, to hear specially recorded versions of books, to record lecture notes,

and to extend the length of time that she can spend at the computer. An added benefit was that Vocational Rehabilitation was able to assist in the purchase of this equipment.

Another important resource for Lauren has been the STRIDE program. This federally-funded program offers a variety of services on college campuses, including a peer mentor who meets with her weekly and has become her "go to" person. This, along with the support of her family, has been extremely beneficial.

Lauren has completed her first semester in college and achieved an impressive 3.35 grade point average. Lisa Mitchell notes that, "This is very good for a first semester freshman, not to mention for someone with the difficulties that she faces daily." What's Lauren's secret? She says simply, "Get your parents involved; they are your best advocate. Know your limitations and abilities. Don't be afraid to ask for help." It is quite obvious that this plan works for Lauren!

"Get your parents involved; they are your best advocate.

Know your limitations and abilities.

Don't be afraid to ask for help."

Lauren Brown

Partners in Planning:

504 PLANS . . . continued

(Continued from page 1)

Eligibility is based upon a determination that the student has an impairment (including disability, long-term illness, or other condition) that substantially reduces or lessens his or her ability to access learning in the educational setting.

What types of students qualify?

There is no list of specific disabilities, diseases or conditions that meet the requirements for Section 504. While there are students with obvious physical disabilities who qualify, many have conditions that are not readily apparent. These "hidden disabilities" may include conditions such as learning disabilities, epilepsy, allergies, low vision, poor hearing, or chronic illness. Although not obvious to others, these conditions may substantially limit the student's ability to receive an appropriate education.

How is eligibility determined?

School districts establish their own policies and procedures for implementing Section 504. Generally, once a student is referred, the school's 504 coordinator works with a team to review school records, health records, assessments, observations, information from parents, or other applicable information to determine eligibility.

What happens after a student is determined eligible?

A 504 Plan is developed by a committee including school personnel, the parent/guardian(s), and the student (as appropriate). The plan describes the reasonable accommodations necessary to give the student an equal chance to be educated.

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Extended Learning

In an earlier issue, we introduced you to the Nebraska Career Education (NCE) model. This model for education was developed through a partnership between the Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska School Counseling Association, and Nebraska Career Education. It is designed to prepare all

Examples of extended learning activities include the following:

Cooperative Education:

Classroom instruction is coordinated with students' part-time work in the field. Students spend part of their day at school and part of the day on the job developing career skills.

Apprenticeships:

Apprenticeships are on-the-job training for a specific career, coordinated with courses of academic study. Students may obtain certification for specific careers through apprenticeships.

Job Shadowing:

Job shadowing is an experience in which students follow experienced workers on the job. By spending time with the worker, the student is able to observe the activities and requirements of the job.

Internships: Internships are part-time, on-the-job learning experiences that reinforce classroom instruction. These paid or unpaid experiences allow the student to experience the career from the inside and sometimes lead to full-time employment.

Mentoring: Mentoring establishes relationships between students and mentors in businesses designed to teach good work habits, work ethics, and other foundational skills. These "soft skills" are important for landing and holding a job.

Service Learning: Volunteer service projects give students useful work experience while benefiting the community. Many students, for example, have been involved in service learning while building homes for Habitat for Humanity, raising funds for charity, or other community service projects.

Extended learning experiences can help students:

- Identify career interests, skills, and abilities
- Develop good work habits
- Identify on-the-job support needs
- Understand employer expectations
- Gain work experience
- Network with potential employers
- Understand the connection between learning, earning, and living

The connection the Nebraska Career Education model makes with life in the world of work is what makes it different and exciting. The ties between what happens today in the schools and what happens to students when they enter the workforce are demonstrated when schools send their students into local workplaces to learn.

For more information about the NCE model, visit the website at: www.nde.state.ne.us/nce.

(Information for this article was adapted from "An Introduction to Nebraska Career Education: Skills for Lifelong Learning, Earning, and Living", a publication of Nebraska Career Education/Nebraska Department of Education.)

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students for the transition from high school to the adult world. Specifically, it is designed to teach students the skills for lifelong learning, earning, and living.

One of the pillars of NCE is the idea that the best way to get high school students to consider their real-life future is to give them a taste of it right now. A key component of this model is extended learning. Extended learning is the term used to describe a variety of opportunities available for students to provide them with "hands-on" experiences in the world of work.

504 PLANS...continued

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What are reasonable accommodations? Each student's needs are determined individually and the accommodations to be provided depend upon the nature of those needs. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of accommodations. However, examples include modifications for physical accessibility, extended time on tests or assignments, enlarged print, assistance with note taking, assistive technology devices, or many other possibilities.

Is this the same as the IEP process? It is important to note that the 504 process is separate and distinct from special education services. If the student's needs cannot be met by reasonable accommodations under a 504 Plan, a referral may need to be made to determine eligibility for special education services.

If determined eligible for special education services, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed to guide the educational process for the student.

For more information. Visit the website of the U.S. Department of Education at www.ed.gov. Enter "Section 504" in the site's Search box to access information on this topic.

For More Information:

Contact the State Vocational Rehabilitation Office in Lincoln at **1-402-471-3644** or toll free at **1-877-637-3422**.

You may obtain information on the Voc Rehab Service Office in your area by calling these numbers or accessing the Service Office listing on the web at: <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/vr/office.html>

About this Publication

This publication, produced by Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, is intended for students with disabilities and their families. The next issue, Volume #23, is scheduled for distribution in May, 2007.

Please contact us if you:

- Would like additional copies of this publication.
- Have questions or would like more details about any of the information contained in this issue.
- Have a success story you'd like to share with us.
- Have suggestions for topics for future issues.
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To view previous issues of this or other Vocational Rehabilitation publications, or to receive a free subscription to these publications, go to: <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/vr/newsstand.htm>. You may also contact the Vocational Rehabilitation State Office toll free at 1-877-NE-REHAB (1-877-637-3422) to receive these publications.

Additional Resources

If you have questions or concerns about services from Vocational Rehabilitation or are looking for additional disability resources, contact the Hotline for Disability Services/Client Assistance Program at 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at 402-471-0801 or e-mail victoria.rasmussen@cap.ne.gov